

June 20, 2011

The Honorable Daniel Inouye, Chairman  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense  
U.S. Senate  
119 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Thad Cochran  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense  
U.S. Senate  
119 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Inouye and Ranking Member Cochran:

Nearly 41,000 women and 450 men die each year of breast cancer. We do not yet know how to prevent the disease. We do not how to diagnose and make a real difference, or how to cure.. This year alone, more than 260,000 women and men will be diagnosed with breast cancer. While we do not have the answers, we know that the worldwide research community is making progress. We are confident that with the right investments and structure, we can prevent and end breast cancer. The Department of Defense peer-reviewed Breast Cancer Research Program is a critical tool in this effort.

The Appropriations Committee has shown great determination and leadership in the search for answers by continuing to fund the DOD BCRP and by continuing to maintain the integrity of this model program of research. The DOD BCRP's progress in the fight against breast cancer has been made possible by this Committee's investment in breast cancer research. **We thank you for your longstanding leadership with respect to DOD BCRP and ask that you provide funding of \$150 million for fiscal year (FY) 2012 for the DOD BCRP in the Department of Defense Appropriations bill.**

The DOD BCRP has established itself as a model medical research program. The critical work of this Program must be continued at this level of funding because:

- **It is innovative and unique.** The Program has a unique grants structure that allows it to be flexible and to fund innovative, high-risk, high-return research, enabling it to quickly respond to current scientific advances and to fill gaps by focusing on research that is traditionally under-funded.
- **It is a demonstrated success.**

- The Institute of Medicine, in two analyses of the Program, overwhelmingly supports continued investment in DOD BCRP, stating, “the program fills a unique niche among public and private funding sources for cancer research. It is not duplicative of other programs and is a promising vehicle for forging new ideas and scientific breakthroughs in the nation’s fight against breast cancer.”
- Ground-breaking discoveries that offer insights into the biology of breast cancer have come as a result of the Program. For example, the DOD BCRP funded a vital component of the revolutionary work that led to the development of the innovative drug Herceptin. From new methods of extracting breast cancer cells at their earliest stages, to unprecedented research into gene/environment interaction and quality of life issues, this Program leads the way in generating new approaches to breast cancer prevention, treatment, and early detection.
- **It is efficient.** 90% of the appropriated funds go directly to competitive, peer-reviewed research grants awarded only on the basis of scientific merit.
- **It is transparent and accountable to the public.**
  - This is evidenced by the inclusion of consumer advocates at both the peer and programmatic review levels. The consumer perspective helps the scientists understand how the research will affect the community and allows for funding decisions based on the concerns and needs of patients and the medical community.
  - Each researcher who receives funds from the Program must present their results to the American people online at the Program website and at public meetings called "Era of Hope". The transparency of the DOD BCRP allows scientists, consumers, and the American public to see the exceptional progress made in breast cancer research.

While the prevention and cure of breast cancer is not yet within our grasp, we remain confident that, with proper investments, we can win the fight against breast cancer. To this end, we respectfully request **that you fund the DOD BCRP at \$150 million for FY2012 in the Department of Defense Appropriations bill.**

Sincerely,

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Senator Tom Harkin

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Senator Olympia Snowe

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Senator Patrick J. Leahy

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Senator Susan M. Collins